

VZCZCXYZ0000
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #0877/01 2861658
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 131658Z OCT 09
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0177
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0037
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0057
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ OCT LIMA 0063

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 000877

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/10/13

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: Correa and Indigenous Leaders Talk, Agree to More Dialogue

REF: QUITO 849

CLASSIFIED BY: Heather M. Hodges, Ambassador, State, EXEC; REASON:
1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. After a week of protests and the death of one indigenous protestor, President Rafael Correa and over 100 indigenous leaders sat down in Quito for a highly contentious discussion resulting in a six-point agreement to talk more often and about specific issues. The agreement calls for "permanent" dialogue between the GOE and indigenous leaders, talks on changes to the current Law on Minerals and proposed Law on Water, discussions on possible reforms to the implementation of the bilingual education program, and commissions to investigate the death of the indigenous protestor and whether a radio station could be held responsible for inciting the violence in Morona Santiago province. Indigenous leaders returned to their home territories to consult with their constituencies, and the final protestors re-opened the last of the closed roads. At the end of the day, Correa looks more moderate by agreeing to dialogue, while the indigenous groups got their meeting with the President. However, the indigenous leaders may find that little of substance changes when the dust settles. End Summary.

Talking (and Yelling) about Dialogue

¶2. (U) The dialogue between Correa and more than 100 indigenous group leaders kicked off in the presidential palace at 3 pm on October 5, although Correa himself arrived 45 minutes late. During the four hours of heated debate, Correa and indigenous leaders (many in colorful ponchos or feathered headress) traded barbs with repeated interruptions, both sides accusing the other of lack of respect, lack of consistency, and failure to abide by the new constitution. Correa called some of the leaders "rightists" with "golden ponchos" and accusing others of being uneducated and manipulated. His audience responded by charging Correa with making racist statements and ignoring his campaign promises. When Correa left at 7:30 that evening, Vice President Lenin Moreno took over for another hour of "dialogue." Shortly after 10 pm, the Secretary of Peoples, Social Movements and Citizen Participation, Doris Soliz, announced the six-point accord.

¶3. (U) The agreement, which Soliz says will be formalized as an Executive Decree, notes first that the GOE will receive an agenda of proposals from CONAIE to start a "permanent dialogue" on various

issues of concern to the indigenous movements. Both sides also agreed to create a new system for selecting the authorities who manage the nation's bilingual and intercultural education program. The GOE and indigenous groups will both review drafts of the Law on Water and attempt to reach consensus on a proposal within the National Assembly committee that is currently reviewing the GOE's initial proposal. In addition, the GOE and CONAIE will form a joint commission to consider possible revisions to the extant Law on Minerals. The final two points of the agreement call for investigations into the violence in Morona Santiago province, with a commission to investigate whether a Shuar radio station may have been responsible for inciting violence during the demonstrations, and another joint CONAIE-GOE commission to try to determine responsibility for the death of protestor Bosco Wisuma in that province.

To the Barricades and Back

¶4. (U) The strike called by the Confederation of Indigenous People of Ecuador (CONAIE) on September 27 to protest the proposed Law on Water initially fizzled in less than one day. Only a few hundred protestors mobilized in any given location, and police were able to

reopen roads in most of the country after only a few hours (Ref A). CONAIE's president, Marlon Santi, called off the mobilizations once the government agreed to meet with his organization the following day. However, the Confederation of Indigenous People of the Amazon (CONFENAIE, part of the CONAIE federation) refused to lift the strike and kept the road between the provinces of Pastaza and Morona Santiago blocked. Correa then called off his dialogue with CONAIE, suggesting that they needed to get their internal house in order before they sat down with the GOE, and refused to open discussions until the strike was completely lifted. On September 30, police in riot gear, but reportedly unarmed, moved to disperse protestors on a bridge in Morona Santiago. The indigenous protestors, apparently armed with shotguns and spears, allegedly opened fire on police, injuring 40 police and killing one of their own, a Shuar teacher named Bosco Wisuma.

¶5. (U) The killing of Bosco Wisuma, although reportedly an incident of "friendly fire," galvanized CONAIE supporters and GOE representatives alike. Correa reopened the calls for dialogue and more indigenous organizations aligned themselves with CONAIE. After a few days of demanding that Correa come to them in the Amazonian provinces, and Correa insisting that his ministers would start the talks without him, Correa, CONAIE and CONFENAIE finally agreed instead to meet in Quito. More than 5000 indigenous group representatives came to the capital to demonstrate in support of CONAIE and its list of 25 demands. Police turned out in force, but reportedly under strict instructions to keep the peace without using firearms or any form of violence.

¶6. (U) Indigenous leaders within CONAIE arrived at the dialogue with a list of 25 demands for the President, National Assembly, and Constitutional Court. Most of the demands involved granting indigenous groups autonomy within their territory; the option of vetoing any proposed mining, petroleum, or resource extraction activity in their lands; and requiring that all laws be passed by consensus. CONAIE's leaders received little of what they asked for, although they did gain agreement on the "permanent dialogue" (the first item on their list), and won agreement to at least discuss the contentious Law on Minerals and revisions to the draft Law on Water.

Win-lose-tie?

17. (C) Correa's initial hard-line position and CONAIE's failure to mobilize large groups and other indigenous organizations, as it had in 2000 and 2005, appeared at first to indicate a significant weakness in CONAIE's political base. Correa once again seemed to have successfully divided his opponents. The death of Bosco Wisuma appears to have shaken GOE and CONAIE leaders alike. One interlocutor told Emboff that he had never seen Correa so diffident or so visibly upset as he appeared on the evening television broadcast after Wisuma's death. That the death of the protestor was likely the result of weapons fired by other protestors (autopsy results and eyewitness accounts both report that Wisuma was killed by pellets, like those used in shotguns carried by the Shuar) has also apparently divided the indigenous leadership and may have been enough to get CONFENAE to come to the table in Quito. The apparent violence on the part of the Shuar in CONFENAE also appears to have damped any enthusiasm on the part of non-indigenous groups to support the strike.

18. (C) Comment: Both sides have probably bought some breathing room and will need to consult internally on next steps. Correa's agreement to meet, even though some groups were still protesting, demonstrated some flexibility on his part and may help convince moderates that he can and will be reasonable. The indigenous groups, on the other hand, received little of what they asked for, and may discover that the laws in contention remain substantially

unchanged. CONAIE's leadership abilities within the indigenous movement have been sorely tested, and it is not yet clear that they can speak for their member organizations with any authority. Correa and his government are unlikely to give up on their plans to centralize authority over natural resources, despite the indigenous opposition, given their need for the financial resources. End Comment.
HODGES